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ABSTRACT

Is the purpose of education to produce good citizens and instill social skills and values? Or is it to master certain bodies of knowledge? Or is it the fulfillment of each student's unique potential? These conflicting goals bring about conflict at every level of the educational process. This book suggests that the problem with American education is that it has inherited three major educational ideas, each of which is incompatible with the other two. It separates out a set of general and distinctive kinds of understanding and characterizes each of them in detail--Somatic, Mythic, Romantic, Philosophic, and Ironic. Education can best be conceived as the individual's acquiring each of these understandings as fully as possible in the sequence in which each developed historically. The book also attempts to show that each kind of understanding results from the development of particular intelligence tools that individuals acquire from society. Chapters 2 through 5 describe both the minting in Western cultural history of the five kinds of understanding and the forms they commonly take among students today. The chapters show that education can best be conceived as the process of developing each of these kinds of understanding as fully as possible. Chapter 6 reflects on the theory and clarifies its unfamiliar features. Chapters 7 and 8 explore the theory's implications for the curriculum and the classroom. The book is organized in two parts--the first part deals primarily with modern people's recapitulation of the kinds of understanding developed in their cultural history. The second part looks at implications of the theory for the curriculum and for teaching practice. An index is included. (Contains 305 references.) (LMI)

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